

Message Text

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70

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 CIAE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

ACDA-19 GAC-01 TRSE-00 MBFR-03 SAJ-01 OMB-01 IO-12

RSR-01 /142 W

----- 103455

R 181810 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8854

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 4121

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NCAP PFOR IS SY IT

SUBJECT: REPORTED SYRIAN PREPARATIONS FOR WAR WITH ISRAEL

DEPT PASS USINT CAIRO

REF: STATE 093904, AMMAN 2625

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH STATE REFTEL, ON MAY 18 WE ASKED RESPONSIBLE ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL WHETHER ITALIANS HAVE ANY REPORTS FROM DAMASCUS WHICH INDICATE SYRIA MAY HAVE DECIDED TO LAUNCH SOME KIND OF MILITARY ATTACK AGAINST ISRAEL.

2. OFFICIAL RESPONDED THAT ITALIANS HAVE RECEIVED NO RPT NO INFORMATION INDICATING THAT SYRIANS PREPARING SUCH ATTACK NOR DID RECENT REPORTING FROM ITALIAN EMBASSY DAMASCUS REFLECT ANY SYRIAN INTENTION TO LAUNCH ATTACK.

3. OFFICIAL ASSERTED THAT ITALIAN INFORMATION LEADS TO OPPOSITE
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CONCLUSION, I. E., THAT SYRIANS ARE WELL- AWARE OF DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES FOR SARG SHOULD IT INITIATE HOSTILITIES WITH ISRAEL, AND THEREFORE SYRIANS BEHAVING WITH EXTREME CAUTION. OFFICIAL ATTRIBUTED THIS CAUTION TO REALISM AND PRAGMATISM OF PRESIDENT ASAD WHO APPEARED TO BE IN FULL CONTROL OF SYRIAN INTERNAL SITUATION. OFFICIAL SAID, HOWEVER, THAT IT COULD NOT RPT NOT BE EXCLUDED THAT RASHER ELEMENTS WITHIN SARG MIGHT WISH TO TRY DESPERATION STRIKE, BUT HE REITERATED THAT ASAD' S CONTROL OF SUCH ELEMENTS APPEARED TO BE EFFECTIVE.

4. ACCORDING OFFICIAL, ITALIANS RECEIVED REPORTS ABOUT TEN DAYS AGO THAT SYRIANS HAD CALLED UP RESERVES FOR FIRST TIME SINCE JUNE 1967 WAR, BUT HE ATTRIBUTED THIS TO SYRIAN APPREHENSION OVER ISRAELI THREATS TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST SYRIA IF SARG INTERVENED IN FEDAYEEN- LEBANESE CLASH. VOLPE

NOTE BY OC/ T: NOT PASSED USINT CAIRO.

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NMAFVVZCZ

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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JERUSALEM
NEA
SECSTATE WASHDC
TEL AVIV

Type: TE

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